

PEOPLE and THINGS: By ATTICUS



MR. WILLIAM BENTON

NOW that Mr. Adlai Stevenson has definitely entered the race for the Democratic Presidential nomination, observers are making much of the new air of competence shown by his entourage.

When Mr. Stevenson was the Democratic candidate in 1952 many of his staff came from the State of Illinois. Now his entourage is more widely representative, and his personal assistant, Mr. Harry S. Ashmore, is a fluent representative of the liberal movement in the Southern States.

Mr. Ashmore runs the office, and his research staff is helped by a corps of academic volunteers. This substantial "brains trust" has been largely recruited by William Benton, a former Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. Benton, a big, energetic, voluble man, is a veteran picker of brains. As chairman of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, he devotes much time to intellectual talent-spotting (incidentally Great Britain supplies more than half the experts recruited by the Encyclopaedia). It will be interesting to see how many of Benton's "alpha minds" graduate into the administration if Mr. Stevenson becomes President.

Britten and Pears

BENJAMIN BRITTEN and Peter Pears provided a welcome musical distraction for delegates attending the Big Four Conference with a recital of songs in the tiny Court St. Pierre Theatre in Geneva.

The two artists are at the start of a five months' tour which will take them to Vienna, Ljubljana, Istanbul, Ankara, Delhi, Indonesia, Singapore, Tokyo, and back by much the same route.

The highlight of the trip for both of them will be three weeks or so in Bali and Java.

Tchaikovsky's Pupil

Benjamin Britten told my colleague Nicholas Carroll that he is intermittently hard at work on his first ballet. It is to be in three acts and is based on a French fairy tale of the "Beauty and the Beast" theme. He is hoping it will be ready for Covent Garden by the end of next year.

Britten says that his first efforts

at writing music for ballet have not come easily but that he has learnt much from Tchaikovsky. The fact that he considers the Casse-Noisette Suite to be unsurpassed may perhaps supply a clue to the general shape of his first composition for ballet.

Death-watch Death-rays

THE Historic Churches Preservation Trust, for whom Lord Halifax is appealing on the B.B.C. tonight, are interested in the use of atomic rays to eliminate the death-watch beetle.

Mr. Lawrence Pilkington has recently carried out some experiments at St. Mary's, Harrow. There is no doubt that gamma-rays will kill wood-boring insects, and Sir John Cockcroft referred to this use of atomic energy at the Geneva atom conference.

Mr. Ivor Buimer Thomas, the founder and chairman of the Historic Churches Preservation Trust, tells me that the use of gamma-rays is likely to remain in the experimental stage for many years. The difficulty of getting the rays to the church roofs is considerable; and, unless great care is taken, the after-effects of a dose of gamma-rays might distress the congregation as much as the beetles.

Mixed Parties

IN the last three days Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean has seen much of Edvard Kardelj, Marshal Tito's principal lieutenant. Apart from informal meetings these two veterans of the partisan fighting in Yugoslavia have sat side by side at Chatham House, an Embassy lunch, and Covent Garden, where Mr. Kardelj politely suppressed his dislike of Richard Strauss's music.

Kenneth Younger and Christopher Mayhew have been present at many of the parties, for the Foreign Office takes trouble to see that the Labour Party is well represented whenever prominent Yugoslav politicians visit this country, hoping perhaps that these visitors will draw salutary conclusions from watching rival British politicians mixing amicably.

It is possible that this lesson is already sinking in. I am glad to hear that Dillas, the Yugoslav leader who was recently disgraced, has lately been seen moving freely and happily about Belgrade.

Kipper Haul

SO far, upward of 3,000 readers have asked for the address of the Lowestoft kipper expert. I wrote about last Sunday, and the modest engine-room of Atticus is flooded out.

There will be inevitable delay in sending off replies and I ask the indulgence of my readers for the stereotyped answer they will receive and for not commenting individually on their letters, many of which contain further kipper lore or gastronomic queries far outside my competence.

I have warned the *Lowestoft*

curer of the extent of his miraculous and uninvited haul and urged him to give faithful service to the host of good citizens who have expressed their loyalty and affection for the real thing.

The Scruples of Max

FRIENDS of Sir Max Beerbohm are increasingly concerned in the modest circumstances in which, at the age of eighty-four, he faces another winter at Rapallo.

Although he has only the bare necessities of life, Sir Max obstinately turns down rich radio and magazine offers from England and America on the grounds that he has nothing worth saying.

Not long ago he was invited to

appear on television for ten minutes for a very large fee.

"But what would I say?" he inquired mildly of the agent who had flown out with the offer.

"There is nothing I want to say."

"Oh, you would just appear on the screen and say how very pleased you are to be here this evening..."

"Would you wish me?" interrupted Sir Max Beerbohm, "to start with a lie?"

Pumpkin Coaches

BEFORE the war, Daimler's were the discreetest of advertisers. The Royal Family used their cars and that was enough. Now they have gone to the other extreme, and their splendeferos "specials"

sound a note of glorious ostentation.

Apparently the two methods do not conflict. The motor trade is saying that a 44-litre Daimler limousine with the new curved windscreen is on the point of being delivered to the Queen Mother.

Pedigree Herd

Inquiry into the fate of the whole series of Docker "Pumpkin Coaches" reveals that the first gold-plated model (1951) is now back with Hooper's as a demonstration car. Plans are afoot to send it on tour through the Commonwealth.

The 1952 Silver Flash 34-litre sports model was sold to a rich business man in the Midlands, as

was the 1953 Clover Leaf sports saloon.

Last year's Star Dust, the 44-litre blue limousine spangled with silver stars, is still being used by the Dockers and may be seen parked in a privileged position outside the great hotels and casinos of Europe.

This year's model in cream and gold and zebra skin ("Mink is too hot to sit on") will be the family's spare car. It has already inspired an order from a Maharaja of fabulous wealth who, pawkily it seems to me, is supplying his own zebra skins.

The Big Cheat

LAST week the United States Golfers' Association came out strongly against gambling at golf,

on the grounds that gambling is foreign to the spirit of the game and encourages cheating.

This is a sequel to what I think must be the biggest cheat ever perpetrated on a golf course. It occurred earlier in the autumn at Deepdale, Long Island, which has much the same reputation for high stakes as Sunningdale used to have before the war.

Two Over Threes

This year the pool in the club's annual invitation handicap and Calcutta sweep auction amounted to £17,000.

A certain William Roberts, playing off 17, won the competition with a score of net 56, and his companion, Richard Hellman, playing off 18, was second with net 57—six strokes ahead of the field.

These fantastic scores apparently raised no eyebrows and Roberts left with a cheque for £1,500, later to be unmasked as an artisan champion from a neighbouring county with a handicap of three. His confederate Hellman had a real handicap of six.

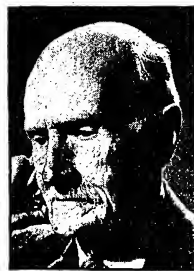
The ensuing scandal has resulted in the pronouncement from the U.S.G.A.

Spirited Rebuke

IN common with many other bodies, the Society for Psychical Research is considering ways of celebrating Professor Gilbert Murray's ninetieth birthday in January. Dr. Murray is a past-President of the Society, and though it is some time since he took an active part in psychical research, his interest remains keen.

Of all Dr. Murray's "psychic" anecdotes I remember particularly the story of the widow of Henry Sidgwick.

Soon after the death of the great philosopher, a famous medium came to his widow with a message from "the other side."



DR. GILBERT MURRAY

The message was intelligible, but contained one obvious error.

"I'm afraid that's my fault," said the medium.

"Don't worry," Mrs. Sidgwick replied, "Henry may have made the mistake."

Some days later Mrs. Sidgwick received a short message from a medium at the other end of England: "Henry says that it wasn't his mistake."

Straight Flying

SQUADRON-LEADER C. R. CUBBITT, now grounded on a farm in Cornwall, sends me some more facts on the old Western-super-Mare-Cardiff Air Ferry Service whose foundation I recently attributed to Mr. Whitney Straight.

He says that this was originally started by Western Airways. Squadron-Leader Cubbitt was chief pilot to the company and his old log book shows that he opened the service with a DH 82 Rapide on May 30, 1936. It was not until 1938 that the company was absorbed into the Straight Corporation.

Church and Beauty

OUTSIDE one church in Waddington there is a large sign saying: "Come in and have your faith lifted."